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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
TENTH ANNUAL GAN-SOHAGI INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
“THE POWER OF ONE: INDIVIDUAL ACTION, SHARED PEACE”
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES
DHAKA UNIVERSITY
SEPTEMBER 21, 2013**

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Faculty, students, friends ... to all who seek peace ... peace, real peace, peace ... more than the absence of violence ... peace ... justice, fairness, hope ... to all who seek genuine peace ...

Asalaam ‘malaikum and good morning.

Sherrill Methodist Church ... a place unknown to you ... but of critical importance to me.

This tiny church, perched high on a hill top, overlooking the rich farmland of Iowa, was the spiritual home of my childhood ... I go there with my mother whenever I am home in Iowa ... this tiny church still has only 30 or forty families as members ... this tiny church was about the size of this room ... the congregation was small, but we sang with great gusto ... we wanted to make sure the Lord could hear us ... Gilbert Hammerand’s voice was loudest of all ... he compensated for his inability to sing, by shouting out ever louder ... truth be told, it was an

awful din that arose from that tiny church in remote Iowa ... but this tiny church is where as a small boy I was first introduced to the concept of peace ... peace ... I recall painfully but vividly Gilbert Hammerand's shouting out "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me ... let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."

That concept of peace ... that peace begins with me, that peace begins with the individual, that I personally am responsible for the pursuit of peace ... that concept of peace drives me to this day ... from the off-key singing of 55 years ago to this very day, I believe and I try to live the concept that peace begins with me, that peace begins with us, each of us, as individuals.

I appreciate and I respect the role that institutions play in the pursuit of peace. In America, we have the Institute of Peace and countless foundations, think tanks, academic departments and so many other organizations ... all created to promote peace. Here in Bangladesh, you have the same phenomena, including this illustrious department of Dhaka University. These endeavors are good, important, and critical to achieving ever greater peace in our world ... and I support them.

Nonetheless, I believe the pursuit of peace begins with each of us as individuals. I think my mother had it right when she used to say to my brothers and me as she broke up our unending fights: "if you boys can't do anything else in life, at least be decent people." That was Mom's way of saying "respect others, be peaceful." Mom did not say to join a peace organization; she said to take responsibility for our own conduct ... "just be a decent person," she used to exclaim in great exasperation.

Mom is not alone in advocating this simple, fundamental message ... others had beaten her to the punch ... Gandhiji, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr. and so many others ... their message in its most elemental form was one of decency ... decency that manifested itself in Nelson Mandela's offering his hand in friendship to the white jailors who had confined him in prison for over 26 years ... decency that manifested itself in vast campaigns of non-violence here in the subcontinent more than 60 years ago in the struggle for independence and in America fifty years ago in the struggle for civil rights for all Americans, regardless of race or skin color.

These great icons of peace ... Gandhiji, Mandela, King ... added a critical dimension to peace: justice. Without justice, without fairness, there cannot be hope ... and without hope, there cannot be sustained peace. I think hope ... hope for a better tomorrow for oneself and one's own family ... hope ... hope is critical to peace ... and hope is linked to justice, to fairness ... the goals of the century's greatest champions of peace.

I am not sure how many of us are the Gandhis, Mandelas, Kings of the next generation, but I know that that is not my destiny. So, of necessity, I must content myself with a much lesser role than these great giants; I must content myself to the power of one, the power of myself as I seek to contribute to the pursuit of decency, of justice, of fairness, of peace, of peace in the fullest sense.

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me ...”

At the lowest level, the micro level, the human-to-human level, peace is respect of others. This most basic, elementary principle of human life ... respect for others ... is common to all the great religions of the world. So, I cannot understand how followers of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and other religions can beat their wives, abuse their children, cheat their neighbors ... we ask ourselves how can a gunman walk the halls of an office building in Washington, D.C. and randomly shoot people and snuff out life ... closer to home here in Dhaka, how can a human being pick up a brick and smash the head of a policeman, or how can a policeman use excessive force against a protester, how can men gang rape a girl, how can a person attack the home and place of worship of a member of the minority community ... this listing of unanswered questions sadly goes on and on. The common thread through all these acts is that each is the act of a human being ... a human being just like you and me ... a human being who has chosen the path that is anti-peace, anti-decency, anti-respect for fellow voyagers on this journey called life.

That is the challenge that each of us confronts as we chart our respective course through life. As I crisscross this great nation from Tetulia to Teknaf, from Sylhet to Satkhira, I am overwhelmed by the beauty and generosity of the Bangladeshi people ... people of different ethnicities ...

people of different religions ... but Bangladeshis all ... Bangladeshis all who live side-by-side in peace and harmony ... that is the beauty of Bangladesh. Bangladeshis want simply to provide their families safe housing, ample, nutritious food, good healthcare and quality education ... to do this, they want to live in peace.

A couple of weeks ago I accompanied the Prime Minister on a visit to Ramu and Ukia to witness the government's reconstruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries that had been destroyed last September by power hungry cheats and nasty land-grabbers. The wanton destruction was not driven by religious differences nor by neighbors attacking neighbors; rather, these attacks were the handiwork of vile outsiders who sought to foment discord to their personal advantage. The silver lining of this tragic tale is that in the end peace and harmony have prevailed as these communities have regained even keel ... great testimony to the generosity, resilience and peace loving nature of the Bangladeshi people.

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me ...”

As I mentioned at the outset, I believe peace is linked to justice, to fairness, to hope for a better tomorrow. Again, I believe in the power of one in pursuing justice and fairness so all have hope that their children's lives will be better than their own. I believe that we as individuals can make a difference in advocating justice, in bringing hope. I have dedicated my life to this end.

As Peace Corps Volunteers in then Zaire now Democratic Republic of the Congo, my wife and I lived for two and one-half years just beyond the end of the world. It was a turbulent place as four different tribes came together in the area, and relations among the tribes were often strained, at best, reflecting a long history of tribal conflict. We worked doggedly to help Zairian farmers improve their production of chickens, the most promising economic activity in the area. The idea behind this work was simple ... to help village farmers achieve greater economic success so they could better provide for their families, so they had vested interest in sustaining the peace and harmony of the region. To be candid, we did not revolutionize the world, but I think we did make a tangible contribution to sustaining the peace of this troubled region. I think we showed that one person can make a difference.

As I travel about Bangladesh, I see examples much more impressive than our Peace Corps experience in demonstrating the power of one, especially among young people ... young people just like you ... young people ... creative, energetic, dynamic, tough young people who are endeavoring to build the New Bangladesh, the Middle Income Bangladesh, a more just, a more fair Bangladesh, a Bangladesh filled with hope ... hope that tomorrow will be a brighter day ... hope that prospects for their children will be even brighter.

There are so many examples right here in Bangladesh of the power of one in promoting justice and hope: JAAGO, Volunteer for Bangladesh, Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center, Teach for Bangladesh, 1 Degree Initiative, Bangladesh Youth Environment Initiative, ThePreneurs, YES Alumni Association, to name only a few. Each of these organizations started with an individual ... a single person ... a young person like you ... a person with an idea, energy, vision, focus ... and soon the power of one became the power of many ... many who are working, just as my wife and I did long ago in Zaire, working to build ... to build ... to build Bangladesh.

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me ...”

I encourage you ... each of you ... to have a vision, to have a passion, to have a direction to foster justice, to foster fairness, to foster hope ... all to bring greater peace to this wondrous country.

Each of you ... each of you has power ... great power ... the power of one ... the power of one that can grow to become the power of many ... each of you has the power to effect change ... each of you ... using the power of one ... each of you can build the Bangladesh of our shared vision ... truly you can build Sonar Bangla.

Thank you

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**As prepared for delivery.*